

Reading Comprehension Strategies for the Elementary Classroom

Engagement Matters!

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The Purpose of Reading

**The entire purpose of
reading is...
comprehension of text.**

The Definition of Comprehension

“intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader.” (Harris & Hodges, 1995)

What Does the Research Say?

- The National Reading Panel Report (2000)
- Voices of Evidence (2004)
- Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (National Research Council, 1998)
- Starting Out Right (National Research Council, 1999)
- Overcoming Dyslexia by Sally Shaywitz, M.D. (2003)
- CIERA: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (www.ciera.org)
- CORE: Consortium on Reading Excellence (www.core.com)

What Does the Research Say?

Teaching Children to Read: The Report from the National Reading Panel (2000)-

“Comprehension has come to be the “essence of reading” (Durkin,1993), essential not only to academic learning *in all subject areas* but to life long learning as well.”

What Does the Research Say?

Comprehension is the ultimate goal in reading instruction, yet the amount and type of comprehension instruction in classrooms has been the focus of concern for a long time.

(Kamil, Michael L; Voices of Evidence, 2004)

Doing What Works

- Research-Based Education Practices Online
- <http://dww.ed.gov>
- [Improving Reading Comprehension in Grades K-3 Visual](#)
- [IES Practice Guide](#)

Recommended Practices

- Teach Comprehension Strategies
- Engage Students with Text
- Focus on Text Structure

Comprehension

“Teaching students to use comprehension strategies flexibly can improve their understanding.”

National Reading Panel, 2000

“Intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader.”

Harris and

Hodges, 1995, pg 207

Successful comprehension depends on:

- Decoding accuracy and fluency
- Access to meanings of vocabulary words
- Building/activating background knowledge relevant to the content
- Active engagement with text

Beck & McKeown, 1998

Comprehension Requires

- An awareness and understanding of one's own cognitive processes
- Recognition of when one doesn't understand
- Knowing what to do when understanding is lacking... coordination and shifting the use of strategies as needed

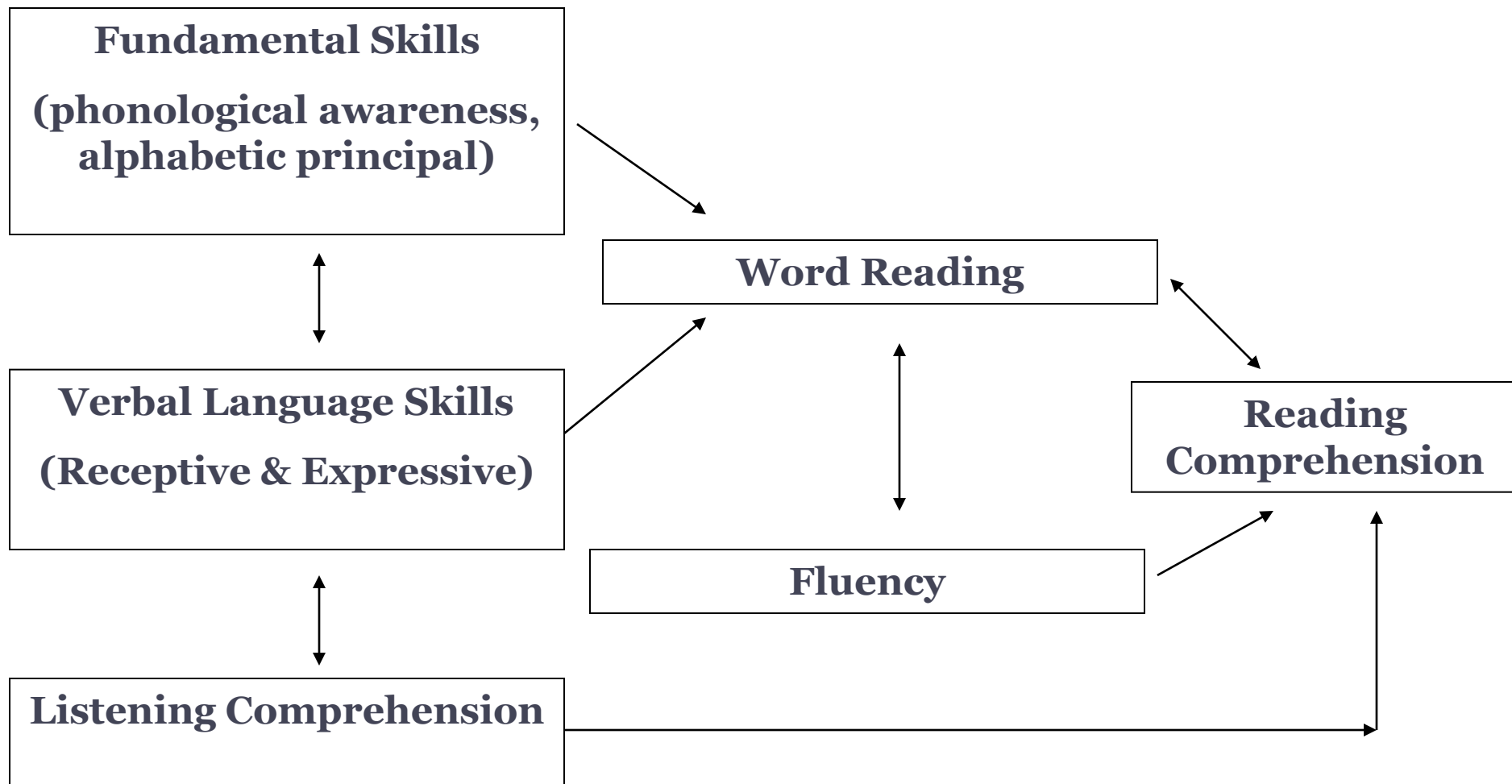
Comprehension at Grade Level

“Teachers should emphasize text comprehension at all grade levels showing students how reading is a process of making sense out of text or constructing meaning.” NIFL, 2001

Teachers teach comprehension:

- Explicitly
 - To make text meaningful and memorable
 - Through read alouds
 - By teaching comprehension strategies
-
- Avoid teaching and assessing multiple essential components (ex. Fluency, decoding, etc)

One Model of Reading Comprehension

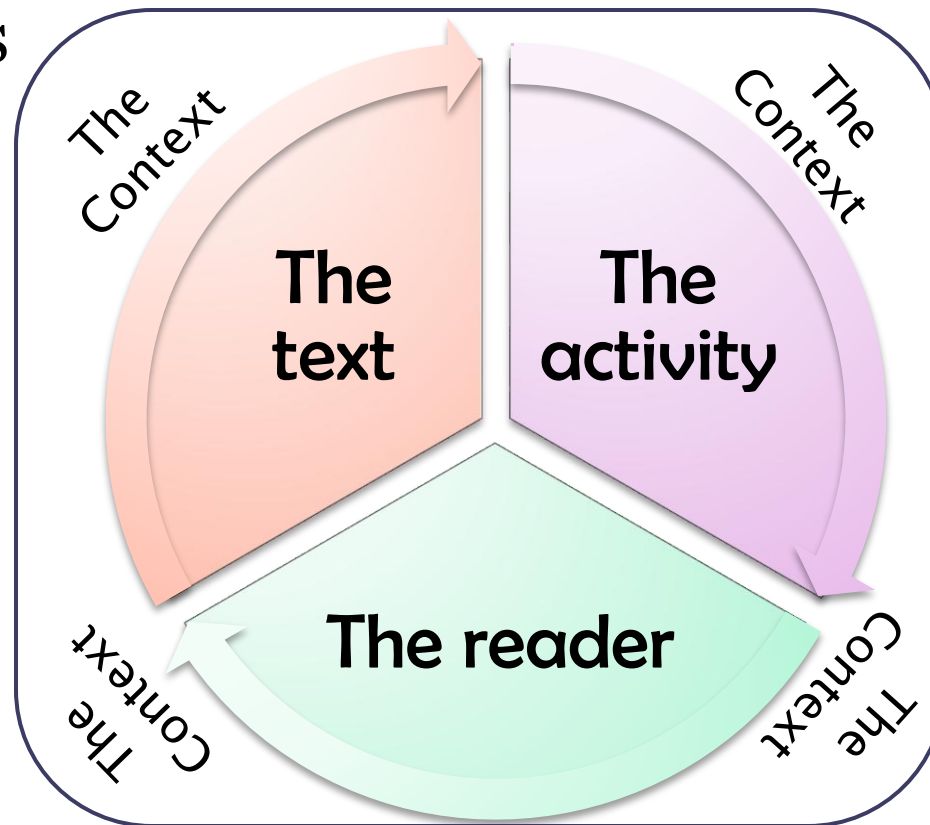


Questions

- What types of problems do your students have with reading comprehension?
- What do you think interferes with their reading comprehension?
- What is the difference between reading comprehension and listening comprehension?

Fundamentals of Comprehension

- Reading comprehension consists of three key elements



The Reader

The reader

Comprehension
Builds upon...

Speed and
Accuracy of
Decoding

Reading Fluency

Vocabulary

World
Knowledge

Comprehension
Strategies

The Text

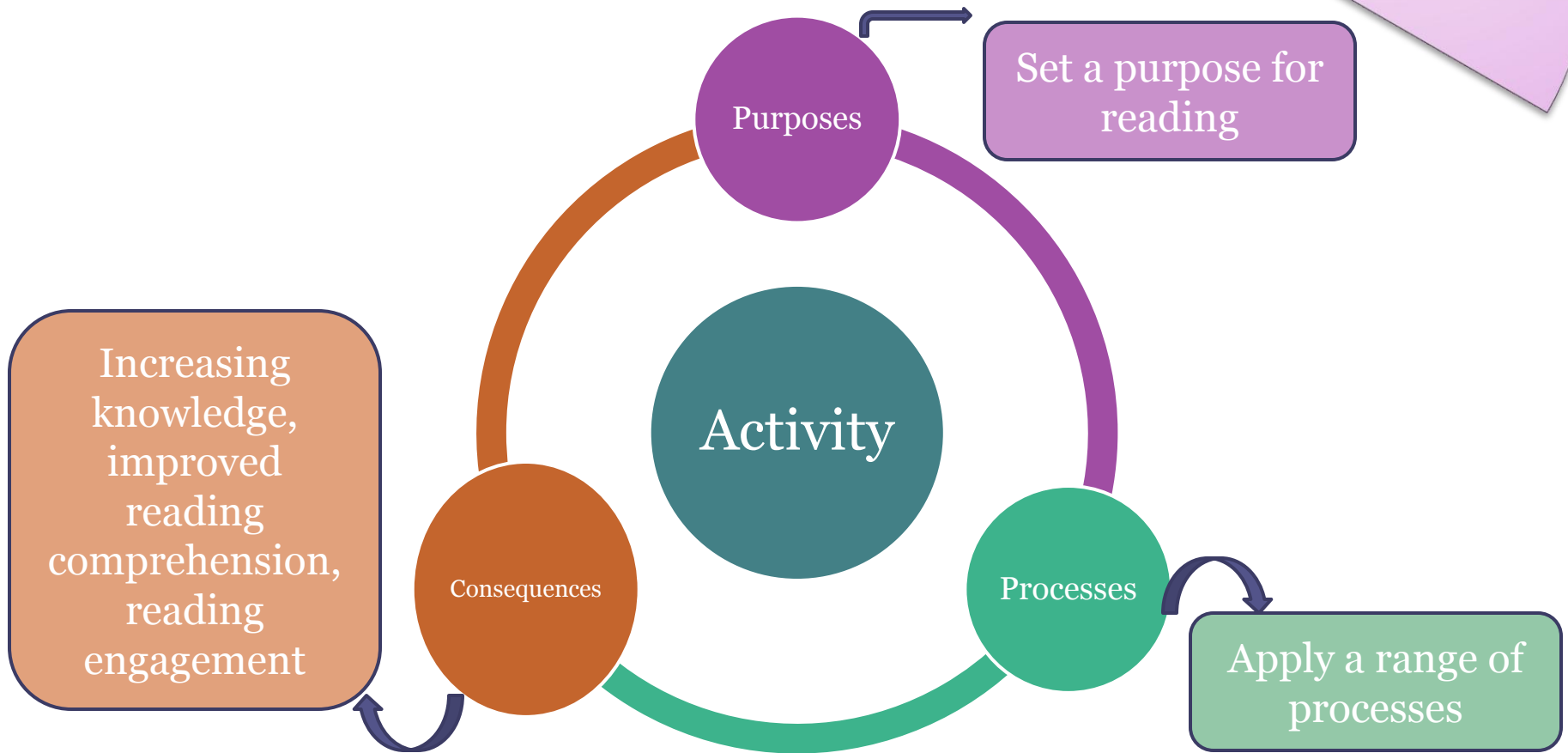
- The features of text have a large effect on comprehension
- Most texts in classrooms fall into one of two categories—
 - Narrative text: fiction, narrative nonfiction, and some poetry—expresses ideas and tells a story
 - Informational text: exposition, persuasion, and procedures—primarily explains, persuades, or gives facts.

For Comprehension Instruction...

- Texts must be conceptually challenging but not too difficult to decode or comprehend (Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin 1990)

The Activity

**The
activity**



What Good Readers Do Before Reading...



Planning a Lesson Before

1. Preview the lesson to determine the target strategy and set objectives
2. Before the lesson, clarify how it is applied in the program... As a teacher, then predict how students might answer...
 - What questions do you have?
 - What new information did you learn?
 - What was confusing?
 - How did you react emotionally?
 - What connections to personal experiences did I have?
 - What difficult words will need to be pretaught?

Before a lesson (cont.)

3. Target one strategy at a time
4. Mark places to stop, think aloud, model the strategy, clarify words, write questions or prompts on sticky notes
5. Prime students' background so you know where to extend their understanding
6. Chunk text into meaningful, manageable parts

What Good Readers Do During Reading...

Read sequentially, skimming on some parts and focusing on others

Reread some sections

Make notes

Tune in to main ideas and ideas related to goal

Check and adapt predictions

Monitor and repair comprehension

Connect to world knowledge to make inferences

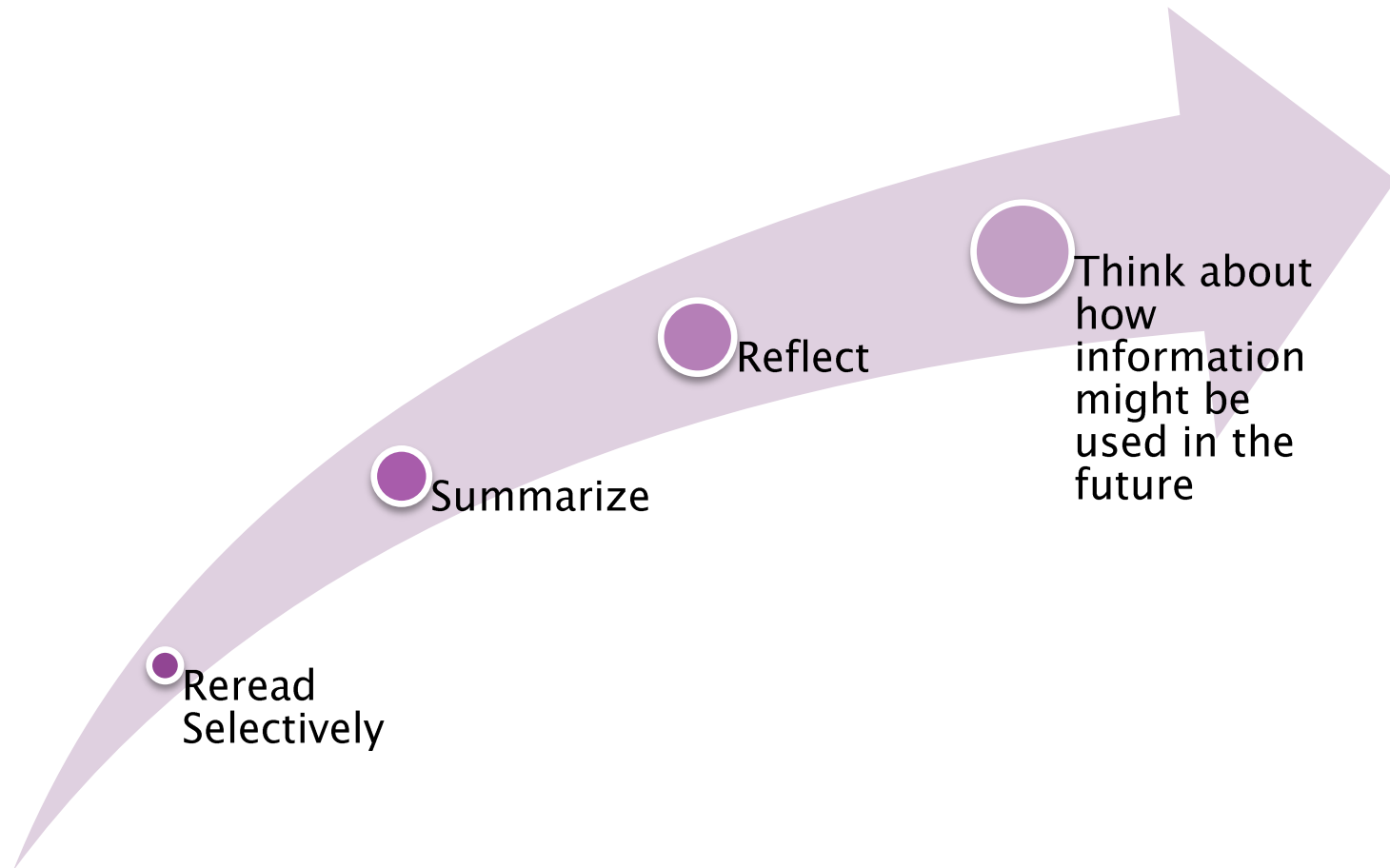
Paraphrase/summarize passages

Respond to and evaluated text

Planning a Lesson During

1. Stop and think aloud during the lesson to show the thinking readers do... Use signal
2. Map text structure with identified purpose
3. Make thinking concrete... readers should write comments, questions, insights, etc during reading
4. Use graphic organizers as necessary
5. Make connections to prevent misconceptions
6. Monitor ongoing comprehension monitoring

What Good Readers Do After Reading ...



Planning a Lesson After

- Strategically integrate comprehension instruction
- Plan the review of the story utilizing the strategies
- Assess the students' understanding
- Analyze what may prevent the students from comprehending

Key Comprehension Strategies

- Monitoring Comprehension
- **Connecting to World Knowledge**
- Predicting
- Recognizing Text Structure
- Asking questions
- Answering Questions
- **Constructing Mental Images**
- Summarizing

Monitoring Comprehension

Comprehension Monitoring

The strategy of comprehension monitoring consists of students becoming cognitively aware of how well they understand what they are reading and being able to take the necessary steps to increase their understanding of text.

- Identifying what the difficulty is
- Restating what was read
- Looking back through the text
- Looking forward in the text for information
- Generating questions

This is not a natural process and students must be taught how to monitor their comprehension.

Instruction in Monitoring Comprehension

- Requires multiple approaches
- Requires multiple strategies
- Metacognition
 - Higher order thinking which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning
- Look at the TE... What are the levels of questioning?
- Students as active learners
- Systematic and explicit instruction

Making Connections

- Know your students starting point
 - Background
 - Cultural values
 - Ability
- Help students refine & limit connections to those that deepen their understanding
 - Story language
 - List words related to the concept or topic of the story
 - Elaborate on the connection
 - Provide a writing framework

Making Connections

- Connections
 - Text to self
 - That reminds me of... because
 - I remember when...
 - Text to text
 - This story is like/unlike (story)... because...
 - Text to world
 - That is like/unlike what happens in...

Response Stems - Making Connections

- This reminds me of... because...
- I remember when...
- That is like/unlike (story)... because
- That is like/unlike what happens...
- I experienced this once when...
- I can relate to this because...
- I already know that...
- This relates to...

| Words in Text | My Connection |
|---------------|---------------|
| | |

| Quote/Picture from Text | What It Reminds Me Of |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| | |

| Text | Author | Similarities | Differences | Questions |
|------|--------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| | | | | |

Report from the National Reading Panel

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative or collaborative learning is both a social organization for instruction and a strategy. It involves breaking the class into smaller groups of students to work together on clearly defined tasks that meet their individual needs.

- Student engagement and total number of responses
- Oral language development
- Meeting individual needs of struggling students
- A vehicle for teaching many different types of strategies

Report from the National Reading Panel

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are visual representations of text and help students organize contextual information or text structure.

- Story Maps (Structural Elements)
- Venn Diagrams (Compare and Contrast)
- Concept Maps (Categorizing, Organizing Information)

Can be used before, during and after reading to facilitate student comprehension.

Report from the National Reading Panel

Story Structure

Story structure is the organization of narrative story text into common components such as the setting, characters, plot, events, problem and solution.

- Identifying the content of a story and it's organization
- Learn to infer about characters, and other relationships and actions in the story.
- Students are better able to visualize the story and therefore remember the story.

Report from the National Reading Panel

Questioning

This is the most common form of comprehension assessment which involves asking and answering questions.

- **Question Answering:** students answering questions about what they read.
 - Passive strategy if used only after reading.
 - Active strategy is used before reading to give students a purpose to read.
 - Improves overall comprehension
- **Question Generation:** an strategy where students ask and answer their own questions.
 - Active strategy
 - Students engage text by asking and answering text
 - Improves overall reading comprehension

Report from the National Reading Panel

Summarization

Learning to summarize forces the reader to identify the main ideas in the text instead of the details, and forces readers to process the text by determining the unimportant information and generalizing complex concepts.

- Students need explicit and direct instruction on summarizing
- Students pay closer attention to text
- Students usually have to reread text to summarize it.
- Leads to increased engagement with text.

Report from the National Reading Panel

Vocabulary Instruction

There are clear findings from multiple studies that there is a large improvement in reading comprehension when vocabulary is directly and explicitly taught using a variety of active engagement learning techniques.

- Vocabulary taught in context
- Examples and Non-examples
- Students need multiple exposures to vocabulary words
- Cooperative learning formats are highly effective in teaching vocabulary-pairs, peer tutoring, and reciprocal teaching strategies.
- Computer technology for vocabulary instruction has benefits
- Vocabulary instruction needs to be direct and explicit.

Report from the National Reading Panel

Multiple Strategies

The use of multiple strategies in combination of two or more has been shown to improve reading comprehension of students.

- Teacher Training: teachers must have a solid background in what is to be taught and how to teach it.
- Model, Model, Model
- Think Alouds
- Always be aware

Why Strategy Instruction?

- Strategies focus on the big ideas
- Strategies are tools to solve problems
- Strategies help organize skills
- Strategies help interact with text
- Strategies focus on making sense of text

Livebinders

- <http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=87058>



Comprehension Skills

- Comprehension skills like main idea, sequencing, categorizing, & compare and contrast help the reader organize information in the text.
- Comprehension skills like point of view, drawing conclusions, and making inferences help the reader develop a deeper understanding of the author's words.

Strategy instruction is best delivered through **EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION**...*What is explicit instruction?*

- Direct Explanation
 - Explain to students what the strategy is and its purpose
- Model
 - Demonstrate the strategy for students using a think-aloud while interacting with the text
- Guided Practice
 - Work together with students to help them learn how and when to use the strategy
- Feedback
 - As students participate in guided practice, provide feedback regarding correct and incorrect usage of the strategy (praise students for strategy steps they used and remind them of steps they left out).
- Application
 - Remind students to use the strategy while they continued to read the current text and while they read other texts.

Why Do Children Struggle with Reading Comprehension

- Word Recognition/Reading Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Failure to use text structure to facilitate comprehension
- Failure to monitor comprehension
 - Stop... do I understand what I just read?
 - Teach “fix up strategies”: reread, read ahead, adjust pace, etc
- Read “The Complex Challenge of Comprehension” from The CORE Reading Expert, Fall 2004 and discuss

Fluency and Comprehension

- It is not an end in itself
- It is a critical gateway to comprehension
- Fluent reading frees resources to process meaning
- Accuracy within fluency also effects comprehension

Questioning

- Is the key to understanding
- Clarifies confusion
- Stimulates research
- Propels us forward to want to learn more
- Takes us to a deeper level of understanding
- Use sticky notes for “thick” and “thin” questions while reading

Question-Answer-Relationships

- **Right There** - the answer is directly stated in the text, and the words in the question and answer are included in the same sentence in the text
- **Think and Search** – the answer is in the text, but the words in the question and answer are not in the same sentence
- **Author and Me** – the answer is not in the text, but the text provides information to use in the answer
- **On My Own** – the answer is not in the text; it must come from the reader's own experiences

Continuum of Questions

| Remember | Understand | Apply | Analyze | Evaluate | Create |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Recall information | Grasp the meaning | Use learned material in new ways Use procedures and knowledge | Separate and understand the parts of something | Make decisions Judge something based on criteria | Make connections Put elements together |
| Define Identify Label List Match Name Recognize Repeat | Describe Discuss Explain Extent Give examples Illustrate Paraphrase Summarize Clarify | Construct Implement Demonstrate Discover Predict Relate Show Solve Use Classify Collect | Compare Contrast Determine Distinguish cause and effect Infer Point out Draw conclusions Distinguish | Conclude Judge Rate Choose Select Measure Weigh Test Check | Combine Compose Imagine What if... Suppose Create Design Develop Plan Rearrange |

(Adapted from Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

Response Stems - Questioning/Monitoring

- I wonder...
- How did...
- Why...
- I'm confused...
- I wonder why...
- What if...
- How come...
- I got lost here because...
- I need to reread the part where
- I know I'm on the right track because...
- To understand better, I need to know more about...
- Something that is still not clear is...
- I'm guessing that this means, but I need to...

Visualizing

- Helps readers make the words on a page real and concrete
- Focuses on painting a picture and/or creating a movie of the story/text in your mind using:
 - I see
 - I hear
 - I can feel
 - I smell
 - I can taste

Visualizing (cont.)

- Take clues from illustrations
- Combine with “missing pictures” that we create in our minds to make meaning about what might have happened between the pages
- Draw, write, and/or talk about what you pictured in your mind

Response Stems - Visualizing

- I can see...
- I imagine...
- I can picture...
- In my mind I see...
- If this were a movie...

| What the Text is About | What I See |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| | |

| Quote/Picture from Text | Mental Picture |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | |

| Words on the Page | Picture in Mind |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| | |

Fold paper in fourths... students draw the scene/movie in their minds while teacher reads section/part of text aloud

Making Inferences

- “Reading between the lines”
- When clues in the text merge with the reader’s prior knowledge and questions to point toward a conclusion... resulting in meaning derived from evidence

| What I Think | Support in Text for My Idea |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| | |

| Words in the Text | Prediction of What Will Happen |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| | |

| Facts We Can See | Inferences |
|------------------|------------|
| | |

| Questions | Inferences |
|-----------|------------|
| | |

+ Confirmed by Text

- Contradicted by Text

Inferring

- Explain themes – underlying ideas, morals, and lessons that give text its depth and meaning
- Begin with a well known fairy tale/story
- Apply to program text
- Record themes across texts on charts

Response Stems... Inferring

- What's the Big Idea?

Teammates

Self-control

Tolerance

Teamwork

Friendship

Charlie Anderson

Fish Is Fish

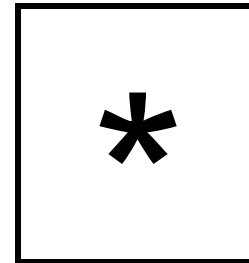
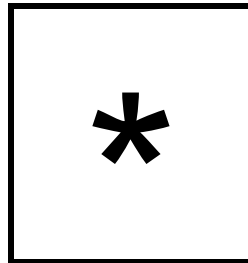
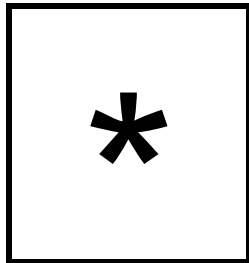
- A conclusion I'm drawing is...
- This is relevant to my life because...
- The idea I'm getting is...
- I think this represents...
- What this means to me is...

Determining Importance in Text

- Depends on the purpose for reading
- Involves “sifting and sorting”
- Typically taught using nonfiction/expository text

Determining Importance

- Not just one main idea
- Asterisk three sticky notes and place them in the text pointing to information you deem important



Determining Importance

Reading for Answers to Specific Questions

- Discuss text
- Ask question “Why do you think...?”
- Circle key words
- Underline important points
- Write in margins

Response Stems - Determining What's Important

- This is really important because...
- I noticed...
- This is significant because it will affect... in this way...

| Topic | Details |
|-------|---------|
| | |

| What's Interesting | What's Important |
|--------------------|------------------|
| | |

| Important Event | Evidence from Text |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| | |

| Facts | Questions | Response |
|-------|-----------|----------|
| | | |

| Evidence For | Evidence Against | Opinion |
|--------------|------------------|---------|
| | | |

Synthesizing Information

- Considering a lot of different facts
- Bringing meaning forward throughout reading
- Integrating what is just read with what has come before it
- Intersecting them all

Synthesizing

- Applying several strategies

- Pretell

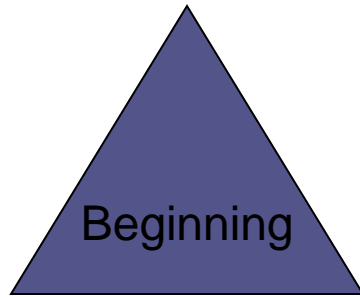
- Consciously thinking through familiar routines
 - Identifying steps involved
 - Recalling the steps
 - Writing the steps

Record on charts,
overhead, sticky notes
and have students
react to the task

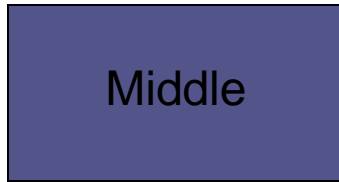
- Retell

- Remember to tell what is important
 - Tell it in a way that makes sense
 - Try not to tell too much

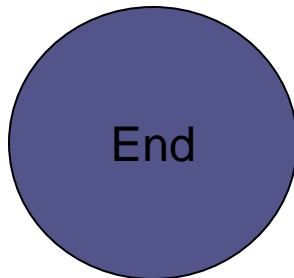
Retelling Graphic Organizer



Setting, Characters & Problem



Plot: no more than 4 events



**“What Goes Around Comes Around”
Resolution of the problem**

Synthesizing

Getting the Gist

- What or who is it about?
- Tell the most important thing about the who or what
- State the main idea in 10 words or less

Getting the Gist Option

- Write each gist on a sticky note while reading
- Place notes on chart paper or board
- Develop a summary of the gist statements

Response Stems... Synthesizing

- The important ideas that I read are...
- This means to me...
- Yes! Now I understand...
- I like/don't like... because...
- This could be more effective if...
- The most important message is...
- At first I thought... but now I...
- My latest thought about this is...
- I'm getting a different picture here because...
- In a nutshell...

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Information from Text | New Insight |
| | |

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| What the Text is About | What It Makes Me Think About |
| | |

| | | |
|-------|-----------|----------|
| Facts | Questions | Response |
| | | |

| | | |
|-------|---------|----------|
| Topic | Details | Response |
| | | |

| | |
|---------|----------|
| Compare | Contrast |
| | |

Nonfiction Features

- Fonts and effects
 - Titles, headings, boldface print, color print, italics, bullets, captions, labels, fonts, etc
- Cue words and phrases
 - For example, in fact, but, therefore, such as, for instance, consequently, in contrast, finally, etc
- Illustrations and photographs
- Graphic organizers
- Text Structure
 - Cause and effect
 - Problem and solution
 - Questions and answer
 - Compare and contrast
 - Sequence

Nonfiction Features (cont)

- Graphics
 - Maps, word bubbles, tables, graphs, charts, diagrams, etc
- Text Organizers
 - Index, glossary, table of contents, appendix, preface

Cause/Effect and Problem/Solution Signal Words

- Because
- Due
- To
- Since
- Therefore
- So
- As a result
- Consequently

Compare/Contrast Signal Words

- Like
- Just
- As
- Similar
- Both
- Also

- ◆ Too
- ◆ Unlike
- ◆ Different
- ◆ But
- ◆ In contrast
- ◆ On the other hand

Description Signal Words


- To
- Begin
- With
- First
- Second
- Next
- Then
- Finally
- Most
- ◆ **For instance**
- ◆ **For example**
- ◆ **In front**
- ◆ **Beside**
- ◆ **Near**
- ◆ **In fact**
- ◆ **Also**
- ◆ **Important**

Sequence Signal Words

- Before
 - First
 - During
 - While
 - At the same time
 - After
- ◆ **Then**
 - ◆ **Next**
 - ◆ **At last**
 - ◆ **Finally**
 - ◆ **Now**
 - ◆ **When**

Anchoring Instruction

- Use consistent terminology across grade levels
- Reread the text without interruption and for deeper meaning
- Provide opportunities for guided practice of the strategy with teacher support followed by pair shares, small groups, literature circles
- Whenever possible, use the same text to introduce and teach a different strategy and integrate strategies



“When readers read deeply, and use strategies to enhance their understanding, their imaginations soar. We only have to show them how and let them read.”

Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, pg 192

Resources

- <http://dww.ed.gov>
- <http://opi.mt.us>
- <http://livebinders.com>
- Teaching Reading Sourcebook; CORE
- iTunes U